

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 8322

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: TECH, IN, US
SUBJECT: "TIMES OF INDIA" ARTICLE ON ALTERNATIVE FUEL SUPPLIES
FOR TARAPUR

BEING UNCLASSIFIED

1. THE MAY 27 "TIMES OF INDIA" CARRIES A FRONT-PAGE ARTICLE BY SUBHASH CHEKRAVARTI, ONE OF ITS SENIOR CORRESPONDENTS, ON THE POSSIBILITY OF INDIA SEEKING ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF FUEL FOR TARAPUR. CHKARAVARTI STATES THAT ACCORDING TOAUTHORITATIVE SOURCES "ANY AMOUNT OF PRESSURE WILL NOT MAKE INDIA RENEGE ON ITS NUCLEAR POLICY" AND THAT PM DESAI WILL EMPHASIZE IN WASHINGTON THAT A DELAY OR FAILURE TO SUPPLY FUEL FOR TARAPUR WILL BE A "BREACH OF THE AGREEMENT." CHAKRAVARTI'S SOURCEX ALSO STATE THAT DIFFERENCES OVER THE NUCLEAR ISSUE WILL "NOT BE ALLOWED TO IMPIGNE ON THE LARGER BILATERAL CONSIDERATIONS" TO BE REVIEWED DURING THE DESAI VISIT.

2. THE ARTICLE GOES ON TO SAY THAT CONTINGENCY PLANNING IS
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UNDERWAY IN THE "LIKELY EVENT" THAT THE U.S. BREAKS THE TARAPUR AGREEMENT. CHAKRAVARTI OBSERVES THAT INDIA MAINTAINS THAT A U.S. FAILURE TO SUPPLY FUEL FOR TARAPUR WOULD CONSTITUTE AN ABORIGATION OF THE AGREEMENT, RELEASING INDIA TO SEEK FUEL ELSEWHERE. ACCORDING TO CHAKRAVARTI, INDIA WILL NOT NEED FOREIGN ASSISTANCE IN THIS RESPECT; "THE OBVIOUS ALTERNATIVE...IS TO REPROCESS THE ACCUMULATED NUCLEAR WASTE

TO KEEP THE PLANT RUNNING." HE ALSO NOTES THAT INDIAN SCIENTISTS ARE CONFIDENT THIS CAN BE DONE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. IN THE INTERIM, THE EXISTING STOCK OF ENRICHED URANIUM WOULD BE SUFFICIENT. HE ALSO NOTES THAT "CONSIDERABLE PROGRESS" HAS BEEN MADE IN DEVELOPING AN "ALTERNATIVE PROCESS.

3. CHAKRAVARTI CONCLUDES THE ARTICLE WITH THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS: "SUBTLE ATTEMPTS BY SOME WESTERN COUNTRIES TO MISREPRESENT MR. DESAI'S STATEMENT OUTLINING THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH NUCLEAR FACILITIES COULD BE MADE OPEN FOR INSPECTION HAVE BEEN RECEIVED HERE WITH SURPRISE. MR. DESAI MADE IT CLEAR THAT THERE SHOULD BE COMPLETE HALT OF NUCLEAR ARMS PRODUCTION IN WHICH CASE ALL NUCLEAR FACILITIES WOULD BE PEACEFUL. HE WANTED COMPLETE STOPPAGE OF ALL EXPLOSIONS, PEACEFUL OR OTHERWISE, AND DESTRUCTION OF ALL ATOMIC STOCKPILES WITHIN A FIXED TIME FRAME. CERTAIN INTERESTED COUNTRIES HAVE BEEN TRYING TO GIVE THEIR OWN INTERPRETATION TO MR. DESAI'S STIPULATION TO KEEP THE FACILITIES FOR MILITARY PURPOSES OUT OF BOUND." END UNCLASSIFIED

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COMMENT: WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT SOURCES CHAKRAVARTI USED FOR HIS ARTICLE, THOUGH WE SUSPECT THAT HE IS AMONG SEVERAL CORRESPONDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN SEEKING INFORMATION
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AT MEA IN ORDER TO WRITE UP PRE-VISIT STORIES ON DESAI'S U.S. TRIP. WE DO NOT BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THE LAST PART OF HIS ARTICLE REPRESENTS ANY DELIBERATE GOI SIGNAL TO US ON THE INSPECTION ISSUE. BUT IT IS FURTHER EVIDENCE THAT THERE ARE ELEMENTS WITHIN THE GOI AND ELSEWHERE WHICH ARE HARD-NOSED ON THE ISSUE AND WILL WANT DESAI TO BE TOUGH ON IT SHOULD HE FEEL IT ADVISABLE TO DEFINE FURTHER HIS CONDITIONS FOR ACCEPTANCE OF FULL-SCOPE SAFEGUARDS.
GOHEEN

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